

A Semiotic Study of *TikTok* Content Captions in the *Toba Batak* Language

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the meaning of signs, symbols, and cultural representations contained in the captions of TikTok content in the Toba Batak language. The phenomenon of the use of regional languages on social media indicates a transformation of oral culture into the digital space, which is utilized by the younger generation as a means of communication, entertainment, and strengthening ethnic identity. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with Roland Barthes's semiotic theory that emphasizes denotative meaning, connotation, and myth. Research data were obtained from a number of captions on TikTok content in the Toba Batak language uploaded by Batak content creators during a certain observation period. Data collection techniques were carried out through digital observation, documentation, and recording caption texts relevant to the research focus. The results show that the Toba Batak language captions not only function as a visual complement to the content, but also serve as a medium for conveying cultural values, humor, social satire, kinship relations, and the collective identity of the Batak people. The connotative meanings in the captions show the adaptation of local culture to the development of modern digital communication. In addition, the use of typical Toba Batak terms in TikTok media forms a social myth about the character of the Batak people who are firm, humorous, and uphold family solidarity. This study concludes that TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language have a strong semiotic function in maintaining the existence of local culture amidst the flow of digital media globalization and become a form of virtual representation of the cultural identity of the young Batak generation.

Keywords: *semiotics, TikTok, Batak Toba, digital caption*

Introduction

The development of social media in the digital era has significantly changed people's communication patterns, including the use of regional languages in virtual spaces. The TikTok app has become one of the most widely used media by the younger generation to express cultural identity through video, audio, and short captions. The use of Toba Batak language in TikTok content captions demonstrates that regional languages function not only as traditional communication tools but also as symbols of social identity in the digital world. According to Rulli Nasrullah (2015), social media enables users to construct representations of themselves and their communities through ongoing symbolic interactions. In this context, captions in Toba Batak language TikTok content not only serve as visual complements but also contain signs, meanings, and cultural messages that are interesting to examine semiotically.

The use of Toba Batak language in digital media is growing with the increasing number of local content creators on TikTok. Many users utilize typical Batak expressions,

ethnic humor, and kinship terms in captions to create emotional closeness with viewers. The use of regional languages on social media demonstrates the adaptation of local culture to developments in modern communication technology. Robert Sibarani (2012) stated that traditions and cultural identities can survive if passed down through media that aligns with societal developments. Therefore, the use of Toba Batak captions on TikTok can be understood as a form of transformation from oral culture to digital culture that maintains the local values of the Batak people.

Numerous researchers have conducted studies on regional languages in social media, particularly regarding cultural identity and digital communication. Research by Pratiwi and Rahmat (2021) shows that the use of regional languages on social media can strengthen group solidarity and increase a sense of belonging to local culture. Another study by Harahap (2022) explains that Batak-language digital content has a unique appeal due to its humorous elements, social closeness, and strong emotional expression. However, most previous research has focused on digital communication and regional language preservation, while studies on the meaning of signs in Toba Batak-language TikTok captions are relatively limited.

In semiotics, every form of language is understood as a system of signs containing specific meanings. Semiotics studies the relationship between signs, signifiers, and signifieds in the process of human communication. According to Roland Barthes (1977), signs not only have denotative meanings but also give rise to connotative meanings and social myths shaped by a society's culture. TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language can be viewed as cultural signs because they contain specific symbols that represent the identity, humor, social relations, and values of the Batak people. Therefore, a semiotic approach is relevant for uncovering the hidden meanings behind the use of the Toba Batak language in the digital space.

In addition to Barthes's theory, Charles Sanders Peirce's thoughts on icons, indices, and symbols also make important contributions to understanding the meaning of signs in digital media. Peirce (1931) explained that signs have a specific relationship with objects and the interpretations that emerge in society. In the context of TikTok captions, the use of certain words, typical Batak greetings, and kinship terms can function as cultural symbols reflecting the user's ethnic identity. Simple captions often contain complex social meanings influenced by the collective cultural experiences of the Toba Batak people. Thus, semiotic analysis allows researchers to understand how regional languages are used as a medium for cultural representation in digital communication.

TikTok, as a short-form video-based social media platform, has distinct characteristics compared to other digital platforms. This application allows users to combine text, sound, music, and visuals into a single, engaging content. According to Kaye et al. (2021), TikTok has become a popular medium because it fosters active user participation through trends, humor, and community identity. Captions in TikTok serve to clarify the context of the video while fostering emotional connection with the audience. In Toba Batak language content, captions are often used to convey satire, humorous expressions, and cultural advice understood by specific communities. This demonstrates that captions have important communicative and symbolic functions in social media.

Previous research on social media semiotics has generally focused on visual analysis and popular communication. Research by Suryani (2020) examines the semiotics of digital memes as a representation of social criticism in internet media. Another study by Lubis and Manurung (2023) discusses the use of the Batak language in TikTok videos as a form of local cultural preservation. However, these studies have not specifically analyzed Toba Batak TikTok captions using Barthes's semiotic approach. Furthermore,

most studies focus on video and audio elements, while captions, as digital texts, are rarely the primary object of scientific inquiry.

Based on previous research, there are research gaps that serve as an important basis for conducting this study. First, research on the Toba Batak language on social media still focuses more on cultural preservation and online communication in general. Second, semiotic research on TikTok tends to emphasize visual elements over caption text. Third, there is little research linking Barthes's semiotic theory to the use of Toba Batak captions in the context of digital cultural identity. Therefore, this study aims to address the gap in research on the meaning of signs, connotations, and cultural myths contained in the captions of TikTok content in the Toba Batak language.

The research question is how the semiotic signs found in the captions of TikTok content in the Toba Batak language are represented, and how the denotative, connotative, and cultural myths are represented through these captions. This research is important because the use of the Toba Batak language on social media is not only related to digital communication but also concerns cultural identity and how the younger generation interprets traditions in virtual spaces. According to Marcel Danesi (2004), signs in digital media have the ability to shape social perceptions and collective cultural identity. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the relationship between language, culture, and social media through a semiotic approach.

The purpose of this study is to describe the forms of semiotic signs in the captions of TikTok content in the Toba Batak language and to analyze the denotative, connotative, and cultural myths that emerge in these captions. This study also aims to explain how TikTok captions serve as a medium for representing Toba Batak cultural identity in the digital era. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural representation is the process of producing meaning through the language and symbols used by people in social life. Therefore, this research is expected to demonstrate that social media can be an important tool in maintaining the existence of local languages and cultures amidst the currents of digital globalization.

This research has both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the study of digital semiotics, particularly regarding the use of regional languages in social media. It also contributes to the development of studies on digital culture and ethnic communication in Indonesia. Practically, the results can serve as a reference for students, researchers, and content creators in understanding the cultural meanings inherent in the use of the Toba Batak language on TikTok. Furthermore, this research is expected to raise awareness among the younger generation about the importance of preserving regional languages through modern digital media, as Ibrahim (2011) argued that regional languages are an essential part of a community's cultural identity and must be preserved.

Through this research, TikTok captions are understood not simply as short text sequences, but as a space for the production of meaning that reflects the cultural dynamics of the Toba Batak community in the digital era. The use of distinctive expressions, local humor, and kinship terms in the captions demonstrates that social media can be an arena for negotiating cultural identity between tradition and modernity. According to John Fiske (1990), popular media always presents a process of meaning exchange influenced by people's social experiences. Therefore, a semiotic analysis of TikTok content captions in the Toba Batak language is important for understanding how the younger generation maintains local cultural identity through creative, dynamic, and relevant digital communication practices with current developments in communication technology in Indonesia's multicultural society.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to examine the meaning of signs in TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on the interpretation of meaning, symbols, and cultural representations that appear in digital texts on social media. According to Lexy J. Moleong (2018), qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena based on their natural context through in-depth interpretation of data. Descriptive methods are used to systematically describe the form of signs, language use, and the relationship between denotative and connotative meanings in TikTok captions. This approach is relevant because the research object is a short text containing elements of culture, humor, and the social identity of the Toba Batak people in the digital space.

The research design used is semiotic analysis, referring to the theory of Roland Barthes (1977). Barthes explained that semiotics not only examines the denotative meaning of a sign but also uncovers the connotative meaning and cultural myths that develop within society. In this study, TikTok captions are understood as a sign system that represents Toba Batak cultural values through the choice of words, expressions, kinship greetings, and local humor used by content creators. Barthes's semiotic analysis was chosen because it can reveal the hidden cultural meanings behind the use of the Toba Batak language on social media. Therefore, this study not only describes the content of captions but also interprets the social and cultural meanings contained within them.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of captions from TikTok content in the Toba Batak language uploaded by Batak content creators during the research observation period. Captions were selected based on certain criteria: they predominantly use the Toba Batak language, contain elements of Batak culture or identity, and have a fairly active interaction with TikTok users. Secondary data was obtained from books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research related to semiotics, social media, digital culture, and the Toba Batak language. According to Sugiyono (2022), data sources in qualitative research can include documents, texts, or social activities relevant to the research focus. Therefore, the use of primary and secondary data is carried out to strengthen the validity of the research analysis.

Data collection techniques were conducted through digital observation, documentation, and the "simak cat" (note-taking) technique. Digital observation was conducted by observing various Toba Batak language TikTok content appearing on creator accounts and TikTok search pages. Researchers then documented captions deemed relevant to the research focus using screenshots and systematic text recording. The "simak cat" technique was used to record expressions, symbols, cultural terms, and specific language forms that convey semiotic meaning. According to Mahsun (2019), the "simak cat" technique is a method of collecting language data through direct observation of language use in specific contexts. In this study, this technique helped researchers identify the forms of cultural signs and meanings contained in Toba Batak language TikTok captions.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, acting as the human instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher plays the role of data collector, analyst, and interpreter of meaning based on the social and cultural context of the research. According to John W. Creswell (2014), researchers using a qualitative approach must be able to understand the context, select relevant data, and conduct in-depth interpretations of the phenomena being studied. To support the research process, researchers also used assistive devices such as mobile phones, the TikTok app, data classification sheets, and semiotic sign categorization tables. These instruments were

used to facilitate the documentation, grouping, and analysis of caption data collected during the study.

The data analysis technique in this study employed Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis model, which includes sign identification, denotative meaning analysis, connotative meaning analysis, and interpretation of cultural myths. The first stage involved identifying specific words, phrases, or expressions in TikTok captions deemed to have cultural significance. The second stage involved analyzing denotative meaning, namely the literal or direct meaning of the caption text. The third stage involved analyzing connotative meaning related to emotions, cultural values, humor, and social identity of the Toba Batak people. The final stage involved interpreting cultural myths that emerged through the use of the Toba Batak language on social media. According to Barthes (1977), myths are second-order meaning systems formed by culture and accepted by society as natural.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through theoretical triangulation and source triangulation. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of Barthes' semiotic analysis with concepts of digital communication and social media culture from other experts. Meanwhile, source triangulation was conducted by comparing several captions from different TikTok accounts to determine the consistency of the use of Toba Batak cultural symbols. According to Norman K. Denzin (1978), triangulation is used to increase research validity by combining multiple sources and analytical perspectives. Thus, the research results are expected to have a high level of credibility and be able to describe the phenomenon of Toba Batak language use in TikTok captions objectively and in-depth.

Through this research method, a semiotic study of TikTok content captions in the Toba Batak language is expected to reveal the forms of representation of local culture in modern digital media. The use of a qualitative approach and Barthes's semiotic theory allows researchers to understand the relationship between language, symbols, and the cultural identity of the Toba Batak people in the virtual space. Furthermore, this method also provides an overview of how the younger generation utilizes social media as a means to preserve regional languages and construct cultural identities digitally. Thus, this research is expected to make a scientific contribution to the development of digital semiotic studies, cultural communication, and the preservation of regional languages in the current era of contemporary information technology development.

Results

This study analyzed captions on Toba Batak-language TikTok content uploaded by several Batak content creators during the observation period. Based on digital observations and data documentation, it was found that the use of Toba Batak-language captions on TikTok serves a variety of functions, ranging from entertainment and emotional expression to conveying advice and affirming cultural identity. Captions not only serve as video accompaniments but also serve as symbolic media that demonstrate the cultural values of the Toba Batak people in the digital space. According to Roland Barthes (1977), text in modern media contains signs that can shape social and cultural meanings through the process of connotation. Based on the research, Toba Batak-language TikTok captions demonstrate a close relationship between regional language and the representation of the cultural identity of the younger generation of Batak people on social media.

The results show that most captions use informal language forms close to the everyday conversations of the Toba Batak people. The use of greetings such as "bah," "ito,"

"lae," and "eda" is found predominantly in various captions. Furthermore, there is the use of typical Batak expressions containing humor, social satire, and specific emotional expressions. The use of these terms demonstrates content creators' efforts to build cultural closeness with their audiences. According to Charles Sanders Peirce (1931), a sign can function as a symbol if it has a meaningful connection that is shared by a particular community. In the context of this research, Batak kinship terms function as cultural symbols that strengthen the collective identity of Toba Batak-speaking TikTok users.

Based on data identification results, four main forms of Toba Batak captions were found to be most frequently used in TikTok content: humorous captions, advice captions, social satire captions, and cultural identity captions. These four forms have distinct language characteristics according to the content creator's communication goals. Humorous captions tend to use hyperbolic expressions and casual language, while advice captions tend to use persuasive sentence forms and traditional Batak expressions. Meanwhile, social satire captions often contain implicit meanings related to the social life of the younger Batak generation. Cultural identity captions, on the other hand, feature customary terms, family values, and Toba Batak cultural symbols.

Table 1. Four main forms of Toba Batak captions

No.	Caption Format	Main Characteristics	Function
1.	Humor	Casual and expressive language	Entertainment
2.	Advice	Persuasive sentences	Conveying values
3.	Social satire	Implicit meaning and satire	Social criticism
4.	Cultural identity	Customary and kinship terms	Cultural representation

The research also shows that the denotative meanings of TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language generally consist of direct statements related to daily activities, social relationships, and the emotional experiences of social media users. However, at the connotative level, broader meanings are found, such as family solidarity, stereotypes of Batak characters, and pride in ethnic identity. For example, the use of the phrase "anak ni raja" (child of a king) is not only interpreted literally as "son of a king" but also represents respect for family members in Toba Batak culture. This aligns with Barthes' (1977) view that connotations are formed through the relationship between signs and the cultural experiences of the people who use them.

In addition to connotative meanings, this study found cultural myths emerging through the use of Toba Batak TikTok captions. These cultural myths relate to societal views of the Batak people as assertive, humorous, open, and upholding family solidarity. These myths are formed through the use of certain words, language styles, and communication patterns that are repeatedly repeated in various TikTok content. According to Marcel Danesi (2004), digital media has the ability to shape social myths through the repetition of symbols and language in public communication. Based on the research results, TikTok captions are one medium that strengthens the construction of Batak cultural identity in the virtual space.

This study also found that the use of Toba Batak language in TikTok captions is influenced by the age and community of the audience. Content creators targeting younger

generations tend to use a mix of Batak and Indonesian to facilitate understanding by social media users from various cultural backgrounds. Conversely, creators focusing on traditional cultural content tend to use Toba Batak language entirely. The use of this mix of languages demonstrates the process of adaptation of local culture to developments in modern digital communication. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural representation in media is always subject to negotiation according to the social context of the community using the media.

The results of subsequent research showed that Toba Batak captions are often used to strengthen emotional bonds between content creators and audiences. Captions using kinship terms such as "ito," "amang," "inang," and "lae" have been shown to generate more active comment responses than regular captions. The use of these terms creates a sense of social closeness and group identity among TikTok users. Furthermore, distinctive Batak humor in captions is also a key factor in attracting audience attention. According to John Fiske (1990), popular media operates through cultural proximity, which can build audience emotional engagement in mass communication.

This research also found that some Toba Batak TikTok captions contain social criticism of the lives of young people, romantic relationships, economic conditions, and family relationships. This social criticism is generally conveyed through humor and subtle satire, thus remaining well-received by TikTok audiences. The use of satire in captions demonstrates that social media is used not only for entertainment but also as a platform for expressing social opinions within the Toba Batak community. This demonstrates that TikTok captions have a broader communicative function than simply supporting text for videos.

The following are the results of the categorization of semiotic meanings found in TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language.

Table 2. The results of the categorization of semiotic meanings

Types of Meaning	Key Findings	Representation
Denotative	Daily Activities	Literal Meaning
Connotative	Solidarity and Humor	Cultural Meaning
Myths	Batak Characteristics	Social Identity

Overall, the research results show that captions for Toba Batak language TikTok content have a strong semiotic function in representing the cultural identity of the Batak people in the digital era. Captions not only serve as a visual complement to the content but also serve as a medium for conveying cultural symbols, local humor, social solidarity, and family values of the Toba Batak people. The use of regional languages in TikTok demonstrates the transformation of oral culture into a modern form of digital communication that maintains local cultural characteristics. The results of this study also indicate that social media can be an important space for the younger generation of Batak people to maintain the existence of regional languages and build cultural identity virtually amidst the development of contemporary communication technology in Indonesian society today.

Discussion

The research results show that Toba Batak language TikTok content captions serve a broader function than simply complementing videos. Captions serve as a medium for

cultural representation, emotional expression, and affirmation of ethnic identity in the digital space. The use of Toba Batak language in captions demonstrates that social media has become a new space for communities to maintain the existence of local culture. According to Stuart Hall (1997), cultural representation in media is the process of producing meaning through language, symbols, and social communication practices. In the context of this research, TikTok captions serve as a means of producing Toba Batak cultural meaning, constructed through the use of distinctive terms, local humor, and kinship symbols in the digital communication of the younger generation.

The use of Toba Batak language in TikTok captions demonstrates the transformation of oral culture into digital culture. The Batak community's communication traditions, which were previously primarily conveyed face-to-face, are now undergoing a transformation through social media. This change does not eliminate cultural values, but rather adapts them to developments in modern communication technology. Robert Sibarani (2012) stated that local culture can survive if it is able to adapt to social changes. Based on the research findings, the use of Toba Batak language captions on TikTok is a form of cultural adaptation that allows the regional language to continue to be used and understood by the younger generation in everyday digital life.

The research findings show that kinship terms such as "ito," "lae," "amang," and "inang" have a strong symbolic function in the digital communication of the Toba Batak people. These terms not only indicate literal family relationships but also reflect social solidarity and a sense of closeness among TikTok users. In Charles Sanders Peirce's (1931) semiotic theory, a symbol is a sign whose meaning is formed through social agreement within a cultural community. Thus, Batak kinship terms in TikTok captions function as symbols of collective identity shared by the Toba Batak people in the virtual space.

Based on the research results, humorous captions are the most dominant type of caption used by Toba Batak-language TikTok content creators. Humor in captions is typically conveyed through subtle sarcasm, hyperbole, and play on the Batak language, easily understood by audiences. This use of humor demonstrates that Toba Batak people's digital communication is inseparable from their expressive and communicative oral culture. According to John Fiske (1990), popular media operates through cultural proximity and the social experiences of audiences. Therefore, Batak humor in TikTok captions is a communication strategy capable of fostering emotional engagement between creators and social media users.

In addition to humor, this study also found that Toba Batak-language TikTok captions contain elements of advice and social criticism. This advice is typically delivered using simple expressions related to family life, social interactions, and the social relationships of the younger generation. Meanwhile, social criticism often appears in the form of satire on economic conditions, romantic relationships, and social behavior. The use of satire demonstrates that social media can be a public communication space for people to express their opinions creatively. According to Marshall McLuhan (1964), media is not only a means of conveying messages but also shapes how society understands social reality. In this study, TikTok captions serve as a medium that symbolically and communicatively represents the social views of the Toba Batak people.

The denotative meanings found in TikTok captions are generally related to the daily activities of social media users. However, at the connotative level, the captions reveal deeper cultural meanings, such as family solidarity, stereotypes of Batak characters, and pride in ethnic identity. This demonstrates that even simple digital texts can contain complex layers of cultural meaning. According to Roland Barthes (1977), connotative

meaning arises from the relationship between signs and the cultural experiences of the people who use them. Therefore, TikTok captions in the Toba Batak language can be understood as cultural representations shaped by the Batak people's daily social experiences.

This study also found the formation of cultural myths through the use of TikTok captions. These myths relate to the character of the Batak people, who are considered assertive, humorous, hardworking, and uphold family solidarity. Cultural myths are formed through the repetition of symbols and language used repeatedly in various digital content. According to Marcel Danesi (2004), digital media has the ability to construct modern myths through the reproduction of cultural signs and symbols in mass communication. In the context of this research, TikTok serves as a medium that strengthens the construction of Batak cultural identity through the use of regional languages in digital content captions.

The following is an interpretation of the discussion based on the categories of semiotic meaning found in the study.

Table 3. Interpretation of the discussion based on the categories of semiotic meaning

Category	Interpretation and Discussion	Cultural Function
Denotation	Literal meaning of caption text	Information delivery
Connotation	Emotional and cultural meaning	Identity representation
Myth	Social views on Bata	Reinforcement of cultural stereotypes

The use of a mix of Batak and Indonesian in TikTok captions demonstrates a process of cultural negotiation in digital communication. Content creators strive to maintain local cultural identity without losing the communicative aspect for a wider audience. This mix of languages demonstrates the ability of the younger Batak generation to adapt local culture to the development of modern social media. According to Rulli Nasrullah (2015), social media enables the formation of hybrid identities through the blending of languages, symbols, and cultures in online communication. Therefore, the use of mixed languages in TikTok captions can be understood as a cultural strategy to maintain the existence of the Toba Batak language amidst the currents of digital globalization.

The research also shows that Toba Batak TikTok captions have the ability to build emotional engagement among social media users. Captions that use local cultural terms and humor receive more active comment responses than regular captions. This suggests that TikTok users tend to be more attracted to content that is culturally related to their social experiences. According to Henry Jenkins (2006), participatory culture in digital media is formed through active user interaction with content deemed relevant to their social identities. Thus, Toba Batak captions not only serve as supporting text for videos but also create cultural identity-based social interactions in virtual spaces.

Overall, this study demonstrates that Toba Batak captions for TikTok content have an important semiotic function in maintaining local cultural identity in the digital era. Captions serve as a medium for cultural representation, embodying humor, social solidarity, family values, and the Toba Batak community's outlook on life. The use of regional languages in TikTok demonstrates that social media can be utilized as a means of preserving local culture while adhering to developments in modern communication technology. These research findings reinforce Manuel Castells' (2010) view that digital

communities construct cultural identities through ever-expanding global communication networks. Therefore, the existence of Toba Batak captions in TikTok demonstrates that local culture can survive and thrive through social media, a communication platform for Indonesia's current young generation.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that Toba Batak language TikTok captions serve a broader function than simply complementing visuals on social media. Captions serve as a medium for cultural representation, a means of social communication, and a form of expression of the ethnic identity of the Toba Batak people in the digital space. The use of Toba Batak language in captions demonstrates the transformation of oral culture into a digital culture that maintains local values amidst the development of modern communication technology. Using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, this research successfully uncovered that TikTok captions contain denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings related to the social life of the Toba Batak people.

The results show that the use of distinctive Batak terms such as kinship greetings, local humor, and traditional expressions serve as cultural symbols that strengthen the collective identity of Toba Batak-speaking TikTok users. Captions not only convey literal information but also construct emotional meanings such as family solidarity, social closeness, and pride in ethnic identity. These connotative meanings emerge through the use of language that is shared by the Toba Batak cultural community. Furthermore, this study found that social media contributes to the formation of cultural myths about the Batak people's character, which is considered assertive, humorous, open, and upholds family values. This myth is continuously reproduced through the use of symbols and language in various TikTok content.

This research also shows that TikTok captions in Toba Batak serve as a space for cultural negotiation between local traditions and digital modernity. The younger generation of Batak people utilizes social media to maintain the existence of their regional language while adapting it to dynamic digital communication patterns. The use of a mix of Batak and Indonesian demonstrates a communication strategy to ensure content remains accessible to a wider audience without losing local cultural identity. Thus, TikTok can be understood as a medium that not only provides entertainment but also serves as a means of preserving regional culture in the era of digital globalization.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of digital semiotic studies, particularly in the analysis of regional languages on social media. It demonstrates that digital captions can be an object of semiotic study, capable of revealing the relationship between language, culture, and social identity. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a reference for students, researchers, and content creators in understanding the importance of using regional languages as part of preserving local culture in the virtual space. In addition, the results of this study indicate that social media has great potential in supporting the sustainability of the Toba Batak language and culture through creative, interactive, and relevant digital communication to the lives of today's young generation of Indonesia in a sustainable and adaptive manner in the face of modern global socio-cultural changes.

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